

## EAST HERTS COUNCIL

### LOCAL JOINT PANEL – 17 JUNE 2010

#### REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES AND INTERNAL SUPPORT

#### HEALTH AND SAFETY - AUDIT UPDATE AND COMPLIANCE REPORTING

WARD(S) AFFECTED: All

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#### **Purpose/Summary of Report**

At Local Joint Panel on 18 March 2009, Members considered the content of a health and safety audit commissioned by the Council, and an action plan prepared by Officers. The Council commissioned a further review in October 2009 to check on progress made, and Officers also agreed to provide a six monthly update on health and safety compliance generally.

<b><u>RECOMMENDATION FOR LOCAL JOINT PANEL :</u></b>	
<b>(A)</b>	<b>That progress made be noted;</b>
<b>(B)</b>	<b>Members comment on any action necessary, or measures that they would like to see introduced.</b>

#### 1.0 Background

1.1 Compliance with Health and Safety legislation and common law expectations has been applied inconsistently across the Authority. The Council recognised this and commissioned Zurich Risk Services to undertake an audit of health and safety practices in September 2008.

1.2 A report on compliance was also requested, at intervals of six months. (A report was prepared for the meeting on 18 March 2010, which was cancelled).

## 2.0 Report

- 2.1 Since the Local Joint Panel meeting in March 2009, a substantial volume of work has been undertaken to improve policies, procedures and compliance.
- 2.2 The Council invited Zurich Risk Services to return in October 2009 to review progress. Their report is attached. (Essential Reference Paper B). An action plan will be produced which continues to monitor progress on outstanding items.
- 2.3 Since the original report, significant progress has been made but there is still some room for improvement in policies and procedures and more work is required by some services.
- 2.4 The two most significant pieces of work planned, were to revise and simplify the Health and Safety Policy and Risk Assessment Procedures. Whilst the Health and Safety Policy was completely overhauled following the first review and received favourable comments during a consultation period, Zurich Risk Services suggested further reduction to a simple summary of roles and legislation.
- 2.5 Officers had intended bringing the final policy to this Committee, but as further amendment became apparent, resources were diverted to support teams undertaking assessments, and other health and safety related projects. The new policy will be presented at a future meeting of the Local Joint Panel, most likely September 2010.
- 2.6 A comprehensive range of generic risk assessments were produced in 2009 and have proved beneficial. The number of services undertaking risk assessments has increased from two to eleven, leaving just three outstanding.
- 2.7 The percentage of completed and up-to-date work station assessments has increased dramatically from around 10% to over 60%.
- 2.8 Essential Reference Paper C provides a summary of health and safety compliance across services. Levels of compliance far exceed any of the past ten years at least.

- 2.9 The aim is to achieve 100% compliance with risk assessments by Summer 2010, and 100% compliance with work station assessments, including home working, by spring 2011.
- 2.10 The number of volunteers recruited to Safety Liaison Officer and Work Station Assessor roles has increased from seven to nineteen. (This figure had been even higher, but sadly we have lost a few volunteers in recent weeks). Those volunteers must be praised for their hard work and support as progress would not have been made without them, plus of course the increased support from senior management and the commitment of the Health and Safety Officer.
- 2.11 More health and safety volunteers are required, particularly in large teams. The impact of home working and office moves must be monitored as these will impact on coverage, first aid and fire marshal provision.
- 2.12 The Council is now aiming for best practice. The Health and Safety Officer is therefore drafting a comprehensive audit programme. Zurich Risk Services suggest that this will take six months to complete, and become an annual task. Officers aim for the audit to encompass everything from checking that drivers have the correct driving documentation right through to checking standards of contractors and contract monitoring.
- 2.13 Trial audits of two services are due to take place in June. The findings will be reported to Safety Committee.
- 2.14 Finally, owing to the specialist nature of the service, Facilities Management, items 29 to 33, are not covered by this report. They fall outside the remit of Internal Audit and Business Improvement. A separate review is scheduled in 2010.

### 3.0 Implications/Consultations

- 3.1 Information on corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within Essential Reference Paper 'A'.

### Background Papers

Health and Safety Audit – Local Joint Panel 18 March 2009

Contact Member: Councillor M Tindale, Executive Member  
for Resources and Internal Support

Contact Officer: Simon Drinkwater, Director of Neighbourhood  
Services

Report Author: Graham Mully, Risk Assurance Officer

## ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

<p>Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives:</p>	<p><b>Fit for purpose, services fit for you</b>  <i>Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.</i></p>
<p>Consultation:</p>	<p>A substantial number of Officers have been involved in the project including Human Resources, Facilities Management, Risk Assurance, Director of Neighbourhood Services, volunteer safety support staff, and Safety Committee Members. The Health and Safety Officer has completed the vast majority of the work. The support of everybody concerned is greatly appreciated.</p>
<p>Legal:</p>	<p>Individual employees and Members may face prosecution under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and related legislation, in the event of a breach and their negligence being proven. The Authority may also be fined, or ultimately prosecuted under the Corporate Manslaughter Act.</p>
<p>Financial:</p>	<p>Failure to manage health and safety adequately may lead to increasing numbers of accidents and illness, and therefore sick leave and / or insurance claims. Insurance premiums will increase if more claims are pursued. The Council could also be fined for any significant breaches if investigated. There have been no additional costs associated with the project, and none are expected.</p>
<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p>In addition to a potential reduction in sick leave, staff morale and the Council's reputation may suffer in the event of a preventable incident involving a colleague or member of the public. By having a robust health and safety policy and infrastructure, staff will know that the organisation cares about their welfare.</p>
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<p>Risk management issues are considered within the report, and the previous paragraphs. However the upside risks (positives) must also be considered. There is potential to reduce sick leave, reduce the (slim) risk of prosecution, and maintain or improve staff morale.</p> <p>The percentage of indefensible health and safety related complaints and claims should also reduce.</p>

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